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1831-1832
JAMES K. POLK AND HIS CONSTITUENTS,

Contributed by
JOHN SPENCER BASSETT

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2. James K. Polk and his Constituents, 1831-1832

In the Polk Papers in the Library of Congress is a modest booklet, made evidently by fastening together some sheets of folded writing-paper of note size.¹ In the cover is stamped "Congress U. S." in raised letters with a chaste border, indicating the source from which the paper was obtained. In the book were entered, day after day, a series of items describing a kind of service that every congressman performs and few ever have the patience or the candor to

¹ Polk Papers, Library of Congress, vol. 7, nos. 1245-1258.

describe on paper. That Polk gives into the confidence of this little book such a picture is as characteristic of him as it is fortunate for those who wish to see how a congressman discharged a certain important part of his duties. No man who has been a president of the United States, not even John Quincy Adams, was more methodical or more conscientious in the discharge of his official duty. Perhaps he inherited the impulse from his Scotch-Irish ancestry, for it is a Scotch-Irish trait to be downright—although one must admit that there were other members of the Polk family who were neither methodical nor painstaking. But James K. Polk did not shirk a duty. His ideals were not very elevated, but such as they were he never shirked them. To attend to the little necessities of his constituents exactly comported with his ideal of a congressman's duty. His little book shows what was the nature of these requests. It is reprinted here just as he wrote it (save for slight amendments of punctuation) and without comment or explanation.

JOHN SPENCER BASSETT.

MEMORANDUM BOOK OF BUSINESS DONE FOR CONSTITUENTS
1ST SESSION OF THE 22ND CONGRESS.

John Dysart

Received petition and affidavit for a Pension, from *John Dysart Snr.* of Bedford C[oun]ty, near Farmington. *Wrote to him Decr. 7, 1831* that his case was not embraced by the present Pension Laws, and that I would present his papers to Congress for special relief. Presented and referred to committee on Revolutionary Pensions Decr. 14, '31.

S. W. Carmack Esqr.

Wrote to Commissioner of Genl Land office and enclosed \$1.00. to procure [?] the information desired by S. W. Carmack Esqr. (see Mr. Carmack's letter)—Decr. 7th, 1831.

Procured and enclosed to Mr. Carmack, map and description of the $\frac{1}{4}$ sec. of land desired. Decr. 14, '31.

Allen B. Mc. Elhany

Enclosed to Com. of Genl Land office, letters and affidavits of Allen B. Mc. Elhany of Elkton, Tenn., for the purpose of procuring a duplicate or copy of Patent for bounty land. Mr. M's letter to me dated Nov. 25, 1831. Decr. 9, '31.

Procured copy of Patent and enclosed it to Mr. Mc. Elhany to Elkton, Giles C[oun]ty, Ten. Decr. 14, '31.

Rock Creek P.O. Bedford C[oun]ty

Enclosed to P.M. Genl petition enclosed to me by Dr. G. W. Haywood from a number of the citizens of Bedford C[oun]ty, for the Establishment of a Post Office at the house of *Samuel Bigham*, to be called *Tusculum* P.O. *S. Bigham* P. Master. Decr. 10, 1831.

Jany 7th. '32. Enclosed to Dr. Haywood notification from Genl P. O. that P.O. has been established, *S. Bigham* Esqr. called *Rock Creek*

P.O. instead of *Tusculum* there being another office of that name in the state.

Ahm. Parker and Lester Morris

Presented to the Ho. Repts. petition and documents heretofore presented, of Abraham Parker and Lester Morris praying for Pensions—referred to committee on Revolutionary Pensions, Decr. 14, 1831.

Bills for Pensions passed Ho. Repts. and sent to the Senate, Decr. 1831.

Col. Joseph Brown

Presented petition and documents of Col. Joseph Brown praying indemnity for property taken and destroyed by Cherokee Indians—referred to committee on Indian Affairs. Decr. 14, '31.

March 17th, '32. Enclosed to him favourable report.

Bernard M. Patterson

Presented petition of Bernard M. Patterson heretofore presented to Ho. Repts. praying the allowance of a balance claimed to be due in the settlement of his accounts as an Officer of the army—referred to committee of claims, Decr. 14, '31.

March 17th, '32. Enclosed to him report against claim and answered letter of 22nd Decr., stating the Mr. Woods letter was not to be found in dead-letter office, and enclosing letter from Genl. P.O. to that effect.

Elizabeth Owens

Petition and papers of Elizabeth Owens praying the allowance of arrears of pay due her brother James Shirly—heretofore presented—presented to Ho. Repts.—referred on motion of Hon. Mr. Whittlesley on Monday last to committee on claims. Wednesday, Decr. 14, '31.

Bill, allowing to Mrs. Owens \$110.78 passed the Ho. Repts. and sent to the Senate. Decr. 1831.

Bill finally passed and approved by the President March 15th, 1832. Wrote to Mrs. Owens enclosing copy. March 17th, '32.

Wm. A. Thompson

Decr. 14, '31. Enclosed to Wm. Gordon Esqr. Bounty land office, Wm. A. Thompson's papers, claiming bounty land as the heir at law of Capt. John Thompson of the Revolutionary army.

Decr. 29, '31. Enclosed to W. A. Thompson, Elkton, Ten. letter from Wm. Gordon of the Bounty land office, requiring proof that Capt. John Thompson belonged to the *Continental line*, his name not being found on the muster rolls.

Apr 11th, '32. Enclosed to him to Halifax C. H. Mr. Sarmiento's letter returned Gordons letter and sent copy of law of 1830, and informed him that further proof was required.

Joseph G. Pratt

Decr. 14, '31. Enclosed to Wm. Gordon Esqr. Bounty Land office, the petition and aff't. of Joseph G. Pratt of Williamsport, Maury C[oun]ty, Ten. in behalf of himself and others heirs at law of his brother Dabney Pratt decd. late a soldier etc. praying for bounty land.

Decr. 31st, '31. Enclosed to Mr. Pratt at Williamsport, letter from the Bounty Land office of the 30th Inst. requiring information as to the Company and Regt. in which *Dabney Pratt*, of the name of the officer who enlisted him, and also proof of kinship.

Saml. Baker

Decr. 14, '31. Enclosed to J. L. Edwards Esqr. Pension office, Declaration and additional aff't of Capt. Matthew Wood in support of Saml. Baker's claim for a pension.

Decr. 18, '31. Pension granted, and wrote to Mr. Baker, enclosing his letter in one to Majr. Jos. H. Rivers, giving him the information, directed to Pulaski Tenn.

Feby. 8th, '32. Enclosed pension certificate to Mr. Baker, to care of Majr. Rivers, as requested by his letter which see.

Hall Hudson

Decr. 14, 1831. Enclosed to J. L. Edwards Esqr. Pension office, the Declaration and amended declaration of *Hall Hudson* for a pension.

Decr. 29, '31. Enclosed to *Hall Hudson*, Pulaski, Ten. Letter of J. L. Edwards of 20th Int. requiring proof of another witness as to the fact of service; and also to prove the insolvency of *David Sheldon*.

Decr. 30, '31. On reflection presented papers to Ho. Repts. and had them referred to committee on Revolutionary pensions.

Richard Taylor

Decr. 14, 1831. Enclosed to J. L. Edwards Esqr. Pension papers in the case of *Richard Taylor*. These papers were handed to me by Col. Thos. K. Gordon at Cornersville July 5, 1831.

Decr. 19, 1831. Enclosed J. L. Edward's answer rejecting the application and retaining the papers in the office, upon the ground, that Col. Thos. Drew under whom he served, did not belong to the *Continental* line, to Col. Thos. K. Gordon.

Thomas Debnam and Simon Jenkins

Decr. 16th, 1831. Handed to Wm. Gordon Esqr. Bounty land office, mem. in the cases of Thomas Debnam and Simon Jenkins, of Maury C[oun]ty, soldiers of the last war for Bounty Lands.

Jany. 2nd, 1832. Enclosed to *Thomas Debnam*, Maury C[oun]ty, letter from Bounty Land office Dated Decr. 28th, '31, stating that Patents issued both to Debnam and Jenkins for land in Missouri Jany. 4th, 1819, and on 9th same month were transmitted to J. G. Bradford of Nashville; and requiring aff't. that original had not been recd. before a copy would be issued to them. Jany. 12, '32. Wrote Debnam in regard to arrears of pay—(see letter from W. B. Lewis on file of date Jany. 3rd, '32).

George Maddox

Decr. 16, 1831. Handed to Wm. Gordon Esqr. Bounty Land office, discharge and memorandum of George Maddox for Bounty land as a soldier of the last war. Lives in Maury C[oun]ty.

Decr. 29th, '31. Wrote to Mr. *George Maddox* that the law did not allow him bounty land, he having enlisted *prior* to Decr. 24, 1811.

David Candle

Decr. 16, '31. Le[f]t at the office of Peter Hagner Esqr. 3rd Audtr. aff't. of David Candle, for compensation and allowance for extra-services in the last war. Lives near Moorsville, Maury C[oun]ty.

Jany. 16, '32. Enclosed to *David Candle*, Moorsville, Ten. letter from P. Hagner of Decr. 16th, '31, and A. Kendall of Jany 13th, '32—both stating their offices contained no information in support of his claim.

Wm. Brown

Decr. 16, '31. Handed to J. L. Edwards Esqr. Pension office, letter from Col. Yell and mem. stating that Pension papers had been sent to War Dept. by R. C. Thompson and desiring to know what decision had been made in the case. Lives in Bedford C[oun]ty.

Decr. 19, '31. Recd. answer in relation to *Thomas Brown* and wrote again to be informed as to *William Brown*.

Decr. 29, '31. Wrote to Mr. Wm. Brown, Shelbyville, that his pension papers were not on file in the War Dept.

Andrew Derryberry

Decr. 16, '31. Handed J. L. Edwards Esqr. Pension office, letter of Andrew Derryberry of Perry County, desiring to know what decision had been made on his application for a pension, the papers for which were forwarded to the War Dept. some time since.

Decr. 19, '31. Enclosed answer of J. L. Edwards, that the application was rejected in Decr. 1827, and papers withdrawn by Col. Crockett in Feby. 1828.

Hartwell Miles

Decr. 16, '31. Handed to J. L. Edwards Esqr. Pension office, additional afft. of James Patterson in support of the application of Hartwell Miles for an invalid Pension.

Decr. 21, '31. Enclosed further testimony recd. by mail this day.

Feby. 2d, '32. Enclosed to Mr. Miles letter from J. L. Edwards of Jany. 30th, '32, requiring further proof of the cause of his disability. Letter directed to Wm.son C[oun]ty, Hardman's Cross Roads, Ten.

Alex Pickard

Decr. 19th, '31. Presented to Ho. Repts. papers of Alexander Pickard, for invalid pension. Refered to committee on Invalid pensions.

Robert M. Smith

Decr. 19th, '31. Presented to Ho. Repts. petition of Robert M. Smith praying for bounty Land for his services during the last War.

John Vickers

Decr. 20th, 1831. Left with J. L. Edwards Esqr. Pension office, additional testimony in support of *John Vickers's* application for a pension.

Decr. 31st, '31. Wrote to Mr. Vickers, Lincoln C[oun]ty, that pension had been granted, and that pension certificate was in my possession.

Jan '32. Sent pension certificate to him by Mr. Kinsman.

P. Office at Richmond, Bedford C[oun]ty.

Decr. 21st, 1831. Enclosed to P.M. Genl. petition for P. office at *Richmond*, Bedford C[oun]ty, Tenn., between *Rock* and *Sinking Creek* at the store of *Thos. N. McClain* and recommending Mr. McClain for P. Master.

Jany. 7th, '32. Enclosed to *Thos. N. McClain* Esqr. Shelbyville, notification from Genl. P.O. that P.O. named *Richmond* had been established at his store and that he had been appointed P. Master.

Lemuel Perry

Lemuel Perry and wife—she is the sister of Midshipman J. N. Forsythe, lost on board the *Hornet*. Presented application for amt. Due him; Recd. from A. Kendall 4th Auditor and enclosed to Mr. Perry letter of 27th Decr. '31, requiring the affidavit of Mrs. Perry, that she is sister of decd., that he died without wife or children, and that his father and mother are dead. Decr. 29, '31 directed to Civil Order P.O. Bedford C[oun]ty.

March 3rd, '32. Enclosed to A. Kendall Mrs. Perry's afft. as required by his letter and requested the remittance to be made to her at Civil Order P.O.

March 10, '32. Wrote to Mr. Perry that claim was allowed for \$40.56, which would be forwarded by 4th Audr. in a few days (see Kendall's letter).

John Beaty

Decr. 29th, 1831. Wrote to Mr. *John Beaty*, Moorsville, Maury C[oun]ty, that the 2 accts. of his father Capt. *Hugh Beaty*, for services of himself and his company of militia in M. had been presented to P. Hagner, who gave for answer that no provision had ever been made by U. S. for settlement of such claims.

Jeremiah Dial

Decr. 30th, '31. Wrote to *Jeremiah Dial*, Bedford C[oun]ty, that his pension papers were not to be found on the files of the Ho. Repts.; having written to him also at the last Session of Congress that they were not in the Pension office; and now stating to him that he must make them out anew, and forward them, or I could do nothing for him.

Wm. P. Bradburn

Jany. 2nd, 1832. Procured *Midshipman's* warrant, of date Decr. 31st, 1831, for *William P. Bradburn*, and inclosed it to him to Nashville, Tennessee.

Sarah Larimore

Jany. 5th, 1832. Enclosed to P. Hagner additional testimony in support of the application of *Sarah Larimore* (now *Sarah Logan*) of Lincoln C[oun]ty, for half pay pension, as the widow of *Andrcw Larimore*. Her present husband's name is *Wm. Logan* and resides in Lincoln C[oun]ty.

Jany. 12, '32. Recd. P. Hagner's letter (see on file) that claim was allowed, and wrote Mr. Hagner of this date, to remit it to the widow at Fayetteville, Ten. in a draft on the Bank of U.S. B. Bank at Nashville. Wrote to Wm. Logan care of Jesse Daniel Esqr. and also to Wm. D. Thompson giving them information of this.

Post office at Carmell, Bedford C[oun]ty.

Jany. 11th, '32. Returned petition and papers to S. R. Hobbie Esqr. Asst. P.M. Genl. inclosed to me on the 5th Inst., and recommended the establishment of P.O. at Carmell in Bedford County, Ten. and the appointment of *Chesley Williams* as P. Master. Wrote to *Jarvis Williams* Esqr. P.M. at Civil Order, same date, giving the foregoing information.

William Green

Jany. 14th, '32. Presented *William Green's* application for a Patent, to the Superintendent of Patent office. Recd. letter from him same

day, which I enclosed to Mr. Green, informing him that he must forward a *model* before a Patent could issue; that his drawings were imperfect and that it would cost \$10. more, in all \$40., which he must send on when he sends his model. Wrote to Columbia, Ten.

Apl. 4th, '32. Recd. letter enclosing \$40. and ansd. same.

May 4th, '32. Enclosed Mr. Green his Patent having paid \$38.00 fees, and having in my hands \$2.00 yet due him.

Thos. B. Coleman

Jany. 14, '32. Ansd. Thos. B. Coleman's letter, that he must forward proof of his father's service and draft in the army, and the proof of kinship, befor I could do any thing in his case. Wrote to *Spring Hill* P.O. Ten.

Solomon Campbell

Jany. 14, '32. Wrote to Secretary of War, requested that *Solomon Campbell's* application for a pension might be re-examined and decided on.

Jay. 18, '32. Recd. communication from War Dept. informing that a Pension had been granted to Mr. Campbell and enclosing Pension Certificate. Wrote to Mr. Campbell, to the care of Wm. Hackitt Esqr., directed to Shelbyville. Sent Pension certificate to Mr. Campbell by Col. K. L. Anderson of Shelbyville, March '32.

Col. Wm. Newsom

Feby. 27th, '32. Presented petition and papers of Wm. Newsom to House and had them refered to committee on Post office and Post Roads.

May 10th, '32. Enclosed to Col. Newsom copy of Rept. of committee, adverse to his claim together with copies of his accts. from Genl. P.O.

George Blakemore

Febyr. 27th, '32. Presented petition of George Blakemore, praying for land in the Choctaw Country, in consideration of services performed, in the early settlement of the Western Country; refered to committee on the Public Lands.

Capt. John Madairis

March 8th, '32. Handed to Asbury Dickens the letter and inclosures of Capt. John Medairis for \$240, part of his pension which had been sent to him in the U.S.B. draft but which he had not received, accompanied by a statement of my own that the securities to the Bond of indemnity, to wit, Thos. Davis and Jno. and Spruces Eakin, were solvent.

March 10th, '32. Enclosed to W. D. Medairis letter from Sec. of the Treas. and form of Bond of indemnity, the former bond not having been recd.

May 12, '32. Enclosed letter from Sec. of Treas. to W.D. Medairis stating that old bond was lost, and requiring new one to be executed.

John P. Smith

March 6th, '32. Enclosed to Sec. of War letters of Thos. Watham Esqr. and John P. Smith, in relation to the claim of the latter to the value of an Indian Improvement in the Chickasaw Nation.

March 19th, '32. Enclosed to Thos. Watham letter from Sec. of War, stating that Fletcher's improvement had been paid for in full \$1047,

and that there was no evidence that *Moore* and *Irwin* were intitled to pay for improvements (see papers)—wrote also to Mr. Smith.

Col. Saml. Mitchell

March 6th, '32. Enclosed to Sec. of War letter of Col. Saml. Mitchell, in relation to contract which he denies, to furnish the choctaws West of Mississippi with certain improvements and articles provided for by the Treaty.

March 23rd, '32. Enclosed to Col. Mitchell letter from E. Herring, Bureau of Indian affairs of March 20th, stating that no contracts have been made, that they will not be until Gov. advertises for proposals, and that recommendations are satisfactory.

Jeremiah Dial

March 8th, 1832. Handed to Asbury Dickens, Jeremiah Dial's Pension papers forwarded to me, not having been able to find the papers sent on by Capt. McDuff several years ago.

March 27th, '32. Enclosed to Mr. Dial, letter from Sec. of Treas. of 20th Int., stating that the records of Dept. furnish no evidence of service and proof furnished does not shew that he served until end of the war: Requests him to state from whom he recd. the certificate for reward of \$80, as that may throw light on his case.

Capt. John Stone

March 8th, 1832. Handed to Peter Hagner Esqr. letter from Capt. John Stone of Shelbyville, Ten. inquiring what was due to his son and son-inlaw, for services during the last War, and for lost horse and equipage.

March 17th, '32. Wrote to Capt. Stone enclosing to him letters from the 2nd and 3rd Auditors of Treas. stating that the accts. of John Walker and Sect. Wm. Stone had been settled, and all that they were entitled to had been paid.

Rock Creek P.O. Bedford C[oun]ty, Ten.

March 8th, 1832. Handed to P.M. Genl. Petition from citizens and letter from Dr. Geo. W. Haywood, to have route from Franklin to Cornersville, so changed as to pass *Rock Creek P.O.*

March 22nd, '32. Enclosed to Dr. Haywood letter from A. B. Brown at Genl. P.O. stating that the contractor was directed visit "*Rock Creek P.O.*"

John Culver

March 12th. '32. Enclosed to J. L. Edwards letter of John Culver of Bedford C[oun]ty, inquiring what had been done with his application for a pension.

March 15th, '32. Wrote Mr. Culver that his pension papers were not on file in the Pension office.

James Roberts

March 12th, '32. Presented to Ho. Rept. petition of James Roberts of Jackson County, Ten. (forwarded to me by Mr. Thos. Smith) praying compensation for extra services performed as a carrier of the mail; referred to committee on P.O. and P. Roads.

P.O. at Belfast, Bedford County

March 14th, '32. Enclosed to P.M. Genl. letter of Benjm. Williams Esqr. of 27th Feby. '32, recommending the establishment of P.O. at McCrery's cross-roads, Bedford C[oun]ty, Ten. to be called "*Belfast P.O.*" and *Robert Williams* Esqr. to be appointed P.Master.

March 23rd, '32. Enclosed to Robert Williams notification of establishment of office, and his appointment as P. Master; enclosed to Macon P.O.

Cane Spring P.O.

March 17th, '32. P.O. to be established at the House of Col. Joseph Brown by 1st of May, when Danly's stages will commence running, to be called "*Cane Spring P.O.*" or "*Brown's cross roads P.O.*"

May—, '32. P.O. established at "*Cane Spring*", Joseph Brown P.M. and notification thereof enclosed to Col. Brown.

John Tipps's evidence

March 19th, '32. Enclosed to P. Hagner the papers in the case of the evidence of John Tipps decd. of Lincoln County, Ten. for half pay pension and arrearages of pay.

March 26, '32. Enclosed to Michael Tipps P. Hagner's answer stating that balance of pay due Jno. Tipps at his death \$14.40, was pd. by P. Master Searcy to Jacob Silvertooth his admr.

That for half pay pension proof must be furnished, that Mrs. Barbara Tipps the widow is still living, that she is or is not married a second time, as the case may be. She must also make an afft. herself, of the number of her children under 16 at her husband's death, that she has never drawn the pension and that it is for her sole use.

Zadoc Motlow and others

March 26, '32. Presented to Ho. Repts. and refered to Indian affairs, petition and documents of Zadoc Motlow and others, for indemnity for property destroyed by the Cherokee Indians in 1781.

William Porter

March 27th, '32. Wrote N. Porter and enclosed letter his father *Wm. Porter* stating that the Old Continental Bills sent on by me were of no value; that through Genl. Mercer the \$100. one had been sent to Richmond, and answer from Mr. Heath Audtr. of Public accts. recd. that it was of no value.

Apl. 4th, '32. Recd. letter from Wm. Porter and ansd. same, giving above information.

Horatio Coop

April 4th, 1832. Enclosed to Horatio Coop, Bedford C[oun]ty, Ten. Copy of letter from Sec. of Treas. to Col. Yell dated Augst. 1831, stating that there was not sufficient [evidence] that Mr. C. enlisted for the War and served until the close therof. Wrote him also giving same information, contained in my letter to him of Dec. '30. (see memorandum).

Chas. C. Mayson Esqr.

April 4th, 1832. Ans. C. C. Mayson's letter enclosing one from Sec. of Treasury and one from Mr. Gordon, Bounty land office, stating that the name of his father Lt. Col. James Mayson was not to be found on the records of either office, and that there was no evidence that he belonged to Continental Establishment, or recd. commutation certificate.

Wm. Throop

May 6th, '32. Wrote Mr. D. S. Shields that *Wm. Throop*, whose pension papers he enclosed me being now dead, his case was not provided for by law.

Henry Goodnight

May 6, 1832. Enclosed Henry Goodnight's Pension papers, accompanied with Mr. Wm. C. Flournay's letter, to J. L. Edwards Esqr.

May 12th, '32, wrote Mr. Goodnight that Pension had been granted, and that I had pension certificate in my possession and would bring it with me on my return home.

Wm. Brown (Bedford)

May 6, '32. Enclosed to Wm. Hill Esqr. Raleigh N.C. letter of J.L. Edwards and Declaration of Wm. Brown for a pension—for evidence of service; the letter of Mr. Edwards stating that the War Dept. furnished no evidence of service.

P.O. Bayler's Store, Lincoln C[oun]ty.

May 14th, '32. Recommended the establishment of P.O. at "Bayler's Store, Lincoln County, Ten. *Charles Bayler* Esqr. to be P. Master. This office is on Flynt near Esqr. McDavid's.

P.O. at True's Store, Maury C[oun]ty.

June 4th, '32. Enclosed to David H. True Esqr. (Swan Creek, Maury C[oun]ty) notification of his appointment as P.M. at True's Store, etc.

Wm. Stephens

June 11th, '32. Enclosed to Sec. of War recommendation from C.C. Mayson Esqr. and others, in favour of *William Stephens* for the appointment of Cadet at West Point.

Hickory P.O.

Enclosed letter of John Vinent Esqr. to the P.M. Genl. and recommended the Establishment of P.O. office at the House of J. Vinent in Maury C[oun]ty, to be called "Hickory P.O." J. Vinent recommended as P. Master. Dcr. 12th, 1832.

Indian Creek P.O.

Enclosed to P.M. Genl. petition of citizens of Giles C[oun]ty for P.O. on Indian Creek and recommended Establishment of the office and that *Samul W. Ezell* Esqr. be appointed P. Master. Dcr. 11th, 1832.

Children of John Walker, Capt. John Stone

Jany. 2nd, 1822. Enclosed P. Hagner's letter of 15 Decr '32 in relation to claim of children of John Walker deed. for half pay Pension to Capt. John Stone of Shelbyville. Evidence required identifying the children and their own deposition that they have never reced. pay.

Capt. John Stone

Wrote also to Capt. Stone, that his claim for revolutionary services was a claim against the State of Pennsylvania and not against the U. States.

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